

Volunteering opportunity

Would you like to be more community active and make a difference?

The Surrey Appropriate Adult Volunteer Service (SAAVS) offers support to vulnerable adults, children and young people who find themselves detained in Police custody.

The role of the Appropriate Adult is described as “to safeguard the interests of children, young persons and vulnerable adults who are detained or questioned by police officers”. They do not provide legal advice but offer impartial support and be a friendly face in the absence of a family member or carer to people who may be feeling frightened, bewildered, and confused in an unfamiliar situation

In summary, the AA is involved to ensure that the process is fair, ensuring the detain persons rights, welfare, and understanding are always taken into consideration

SAAVS covers the three custody suites in Surrey - Guildford, Staines and Salfords (near Redhill). Volunteers are required to cover one or more of these suites. We provide 24 hour 365 days a year service. You will be expected to own a shift of approximately 7/8 hours per week and you will need to respond to custody in a swift and professional manner. You will need to have access to reliable transport. Every Appropriate Adult is enhanced DBS checked and undertakes a full induction training programme prior to joining the team. All Appropriate Adults are required to attend on-going training opportunities. SAAVS office personnel and mentors are on hand to offer support.

Being an Appropriate Adult is a challenging, fulfilling and often a rewarding role. You do not require any previous knowledge of legal procedures or social work.

In 2022 alone SAAVS volunteers responded to more than 950 callouts to the three custody suites across Surrey. This number continues to grow year on year.

As one volunteer has said:

“The number of calls answered, visits made, and peopled helped - clearly indicate that SAAVS is a programme that is not just worthwhile but absolutely invaluable.

But the value of SAAVS can also be found beyond measurable outcomes. For those of us motivated by a Christian faith, the SAAVS programme directly fulfils Jesus’ mandate in Matthew 25.

I have learnt so much in the past year. I am sure that being part of SAAVS has helped me more than I have helped anyone. Some callouts come at inconvenient times and are more-often-than-not time-consuming and tedious. It takes discipline, commitment, and sacrifice to make oneself available shift after shift, week after week. This has taught me about fidelity and faithfulness.

Being part of SAAVs has forced me to contend with my own privilege, it has demanded that I face up to my own subconscious prejudices, it is teaching me to embrace difference, to welcome the ‘other’,



to embody kindness and patience. I have realised that I don't go into custody primarily to 'be Jesus' to those in need, but to meet Jesus in them. SAAVS, to my mind, is the practical expression of a theology of inclusion."

So, who are we looking for?

SAAVS volunteers are people who have time to offer to the service (a 7/8-hour shift per week minimum). They are excellent communicators who are non-judgmental, flexible with a mature outlook and must have their own reliable transport (45p per mile paid). They must have good time management skills and enjoy working alone whilst enjoying the benefits of being part of a broader team.

If you are interested in becoming an Appropriate Adult, in the first instance please email info@saavs.org.